

WELCOMING A PORTRAITIST OF IMMENSE INSIGHT AND IMAGINATION

Succoth this year, like all 2020 chaggim, will be celebrated in Melbourne iso, just me, my husband, Steve and 2 teenage boys, James and Aidan, who mostly, (I like to pretend), get along. So, what better way to add some spice to the mix than to play 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner'?

"Boys, I say, "this year, why don't we invite an interesting female artist to our Succah? Someone who was not only a prolific painter, but also won two Archibald Prizes? Judy Cassab! Did you know, she was the second woman to win this prestigious prize in 1960, even though it was first awarded in 1921 and the first woman to win it twice?" "The Archi what", said the boys, and "we're not into art."



Image: www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/cassab-judy/

"Well", I say, "do you remember when we visited the gallery on the Mornington Peninsula, in those care-free days, when we travelled as we pleased, well beyond 5kms, and saw those incredible portraits? That was the annual Archibald Prize finalists on tour. It's one of Australia's oldest and most prestigious art awards for the best portrait painting featuring famous Australians politicians, celebrities, sporting heroes and artists." "Oh", said the boys.

"Let me tell you about Judy. Born in Vienna, she is considered a *portraitist of immense insight and imagination*¹. She painted all sorts of people from socialites to royals so can you imagine the tales she could tell? James, she was also a

draughtswoman and landscape artist so you could ask many questions about design and building.

We could ask whether her insights and grit came from her experiences during the war? She started painting at 12 and studied art in Prague but had to flee in 1938. She studied in Budapest, 1941, but her husband was taken away to a labour camp. She survived by pretending to be a Catholic maid to her own family whilst they were taken and murdered in the concentration camps. She and her family came to Sydney in 1951 with two teenage sons. What questions would you ask them about their experiences during and post war, about how scared they must have been, how they survived?

According to the Art Gallery NSW, Judy held 70 + exhibitions, was a finalist in the 1970 Archibald prize, had 41 works in the competition between 1952-1998 and won watercolour awards for Australian landscapes in the Wynne Prize competition up until 83 years of age. She was made a commander of the British Empire, an officer of the Order of Australia, the second female trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW and was awarded Hungary's Gold Cross of Merit at age 91.

Boys, Judy was an extraordinary woman. Did you know she only married her husband on the condition that she be allowed to pursue a career as an artist? Although that seems old fashioned now, women are still way behind men. According to Woman and Leadership, Julia Gillard and Nogozi Onkonjo-Iweala, the chances of a Booker prize winning author being a woman is only 34% and being a Nobel Laureate in Literature is only 13%. Worse, if you add in the other Nobel categories such as science, peace etc... at 6 per cent. Pretty bad hey?

Wouldn't you like to know how she was successful and how, given all her experiences, the advice she would give us coping with life in iso today and a world-wide pandemic?"

1. <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/cassab-judy/>

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Jo is a strategic planning consultant and passionate, energetic leader with 20+ years' management experience in Melbourne, Singapore and London. Jo loves building organisations, influencing and advocating for social justice and equity.

Jo is currently a Director for the Online Hate Prevention Institute and a Trustee for the Marion & Kurt Lippmann Foundation. She has also been a board member for Kehilat Nitzan, Spiritual Health Victoria, Secretary of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association and President of Toy Libraries Victoria.